

What's the most heartwarming experience you've ever had in the animal welfare field?

That was the question we asked you for this issue's Coffee Break—and as we expected, you had a ton. Thanks for sharing your stories! We hope they'll brighten up everyone's day. And to see the responses we couldn't fit into print, go to animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.



My most heartwarming animal welfare experience was the effort to help an angelic pit bull, Isis. As pits often do, Isis arrived as a stray. We soon realized she was a gem. Her amber eyes, warm personality, and freckled ears made her unique, but what really stood out was the heart shape on her nose. Something else stood out during her spay surgery: Both hips had dysplasia. Her breed profile would be a death sentence in many places, but her hips would count as strikes two and three—if it weren't for people's generosity. We accepted donations for a sponsorship to provide treatment and within days raised \$1,500 to help her. Though I fell in love with her, she was adopted after her procedure by a family who recently adopted another special-needs pit bull mix. I couldn't have wished for a better beginning to her new life!

—Tristan Schmid, director of communications and marketing
Humane Society of Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

We got an 8-year-old Lab from a puppy mill. She had just had a litter four months prior to us getting her. She had such hip problems she could hardly walk. We were being very picky on who could adopt Libby. We received a call from a lady interested in Libby from Canada. She drove all the way down (about 10 hours) and the minute she saw her, she started to cry. She cried all through the adoption process. Libby has her forever bed.

—Janet Baker, volunteer/foster coordinator
Grant County Animal Outreach
Moses Lake, Washington

She came into our shelter, approximately 13 years old, wearing thick lenses, crying her heart out. In her arms she held a Chihuahua mix, his leg broken. Between her sobs I heard her story: The dog got out, broke his leg and now her father would not pay for the operation, so she had to leave him behind. I told her that we will help her dog, we will set his leg, and she can visit him every day. This happened five years ago. The little girl comes now frequently to our shelter and lectures all her little friends about animal welfare.

—Lilian Schnog, president ad honorem
Asociación Humanitaria Para la Protección
Animal de Costa Rica (AHPPA)
Heredia, Costa Rica

Last year I went to Madison, Wis., with The Humane Society of the United States to help with a puppy mill seizure. While there, I met many people from other shelters across the country, but also people from all walks of life. Teachers, nurses, lawyers, housekeepers, all using their vacation time to help care for the seized animals. This group of people, who had never met, banded together, working 10-12 hours a day cleaning and walking the animals; they made an incredible impact on not only the animals' lives, but also on mine. BIG LOVE to our Madison Team!

—Chris Arnott
community outreach coordinator
Lowell Humane Society
Lowell, Massachusetts

A lost, recently groomed dog was brought into our local humane society by a Good Samaritan. Volunteer Michelle Dugan called all local groomers to see if she could locate one who might recognize the small dog. The "Good Samaritan," realizing that there was so much effort being made to find the owner, finally admitted to having picked the dog up in New York City (an hour south of here). She had tried to make it her pet, but, finding the dog a little snippy with her young son, she then brought the dog to the shelter and made up the story about the circumstances of where and when he was found. The frantic owners were searching for him in Queens, N.Y., online, and someone found their posting, and a joyful reunion was made.

—Kathie Heiber, volunteer D.V.M.
Putnam Humane Society
Mahopac, New York

Although our shelter is a no-kill, we all become depressed at some of the sad cases of "damaged souls" who come through our doors. Jenny was one such dog, an extremely frightened girl who'd traveled a tough road and couldn't shake the baggage and learn to trust. I worked with her for nearly three years but had little progress in our shelter setting. She desperately needed a home, but her fear of people kept her from even approaching the front of her cage, so no one ever really considered her for adoption although she was sweet and docile, never aggressive. Then a wonderful, animal-loving saint of a woman saw Jenny's picture and story on our website and found the room in her heart and home. With extreme patience and love, she's brought Jenny out of her shell and into a wonderful life filled with love and security. Jenny's blessing warms my heart and keeps me going on tough days.

—Pam D'Addia, volunteer coordinator
Tri-County Humane Society
Boca Raton, Florida

When Katrina hit New Orleans, I, as an animal rescuer and director of a wildlife shelter, felt compelled to go and help rescue animals. I worked the first day at the shelter in Gonzales and then spent the next four days in New Orleans, getting animals out of the houses. My teammate and I rescued two little dogs out of a flooded house where they had been locked up for almost five weeks. A year later, I went back to New Orleans and went back to the house. There was a Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer next to the house, and I knocked on the door. I heard the two little dogs, and a woman answered the door. I said, "Hello, my name is Andrea. I rescued your dogs after Katrina." She grabbed me and hugged me, and we talked for at least an hour. She also took me around the neighborhood to introduce me to her neighbors. She found her dogs through Petfinder.com. She had lost everything in her house, but she was so grateful that we were able to rescue her dogs.

—Andrea MacDonald, volunteer
Mixed Breeds in Need
Huntington, New York

I brought an older dog named Merlyn home from our shelter after it was determined he was dying from cancer. He'd had a very rough life (he was found living in an abandoned mine). The vet felt he only had a few days, and he was in very poor shape. I did not want his last days to be alone in the shelter. After I got him home, he started getting better and eventually went into full remission. After three months of TLC, he had no signs of illness. He was adopted and lived happily and well-loved for a year until the cancer returned. He died the morning of my wedding. At the time of his death (I found out when I went home), a hummingbird flew up to the wedding bouquet and hovered there for several long minutes. I know it was Merlyn saying goodbye and blessing my wedding. It made the day even more special and truly warmed my heart.

—Kelly Goodin, executive director
Second Chance Humane Society
Ridgway, Colorado

Animal Sheltering congratulates Andrea MacDonald, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Her organization, Mixed Breeds in Need in Huntington, N.Y., will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. Congratulations!

Check out the latest Coffee Break question and submit your responses (150 words or less) at animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering*/HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win **a free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. Responses may be edited for length or clarity; no donation or purchase is necessary to win. See animalsheltering.org for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.